

Proclamation 6771—Irish-American Heritage Month, 1995

February 23, 1995

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's bounty—the abundance of the fields, the beauty of the landscape, the richness of our opportunities—has always attracted people who are in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Our democracy owes its success in great part to the countless immigrants who have made their way to our shores and to the tremendous diversity this Nation has been blessed with since its beginnings.

In March, when communities all across the country celebrate St. Patrick's Day, our Nation honors the rich heritage of the millions of Americans who trace their lineage to Ireland. Coming to this land even before our Nation was founded, sons and daughters of Erin undertook the perilous journey to make their home in a place of hope and promise. They made inestimable contributions to their new country, both during the struggle for independence and in the founding of the Republic. Nine of the people who signed our Declaration of Independence were of Irish origin, and nineteen Presidents of the United States proudly claim Irish heritage—including our first President, George Washington.

The largest wave of Irish immigrants came in the late 1840s, when the Great Famine ravaging Ireland caused 2 million people to emigrate, mostly to American soil. These immigrants transformed our largest cities and helped to build them into dynamic centers of commerce and industry, and their contributions to our smaller cities and towns are evident today in the cultural, economic, and spiritual makeup of the communities. Throughout the country, they faced callous discrimination: "No Irish Need Apply" signs were ugly reminders of the prejudice that disfigured our society. But with indomitable spirit and unshakable determination, they persevered. They took jobs as laborers, built railroads, canals, and schools, and committed themselves to creating a brighter future for their families and their new country.

Today, millions of Americans of Irish ancestry continue to enrich all aspects of life in the United States. Irish Americans are proud to recall their heritage and their struggle for well-deserved recognition in all walks of American life. Throughout their history, they have held tightly to their religious faith, their love of family, and their belief in the importance of education. The values they brought with them from the Emerald Isle have flourished in America—and in turn these values have helped America to flourish.

In tribute to all Irish Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 103-379, has designated March 1995 as "Irish-American Heritage Month" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this month.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 1995 as Irish-American Heritage Month.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of February, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and nineteenth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 27.

Remarks at a Gala Dinner in Ottawa

February 23, 1995

Prime Minister and Mrs. Chrétien, Ambassador and Mrs. Chrétien, Ambassador and Mrs. Blanchard, ladies and gentlemen: let me begin by thanking the Prime Minister for his generous words and by thanking Prime Minister and Mrs. Chrétien and all of our Canadian hosts for making Hillary and me feel so at home here today in our first day of our wonderful visit.

We all have so much in common, so many roots in common. I couldn't help thinking, when we shared so many jokes in the Parliament today and so many good laughs, of all the things I might have said. One of the